

The Plaid Dress.

Jennie was a bright, good natured, sensible girl. Her brother Rob once said of her, "Jennie isn't always making a fuss about things; she believes in having a good time, and doesn't spoil it all by fretting, like some girls." But one day there was plainly a cloud upon Jennie's face. What could be the matter? Every one at the breakfast table wondered, but nothing was said about it until Jennie was left alone with her mother, when the trouble was revealed.

"Mother," she said, "don't you think you can manage in some way to get me a new dress? I am so tired of this plaid one."

"Why, Jennie," replied her mother, "I was thinking how fresh and pretty it still looked."

"Oh, to be sure," remarked Jennie impatiently, "but all the other girls wear pretty plain-colored dresses; actually, mother, they know me by this old plaid. When I went to Gertie's yesterday, I heard two of the girls say, 'There comes Jennie Hunt, I knew her by her plaid dress.' There isn't another girl in our set who wears a dress anything like it; and it makes me feel ashamed."

Mrs. Hunt smiled a little at Jennie's eagerness; then kissing her affectionately, said, "watch and see if you cannot find that there are other things by which girls sometimes known which are more undesirable than even a plaid dress."

Jennie went off to school thinking of her mother's words. Of course she felt better already. She always found that her troubles were half cured when she had poured them into her mother's ready ear, and perhaps this is the reason that the clouds so seldom settled in the girl's face. She did not quite understand what her mother meant, but resolved to be on the watch.

Her most intimate friend, Mollie Downs, came to meet her before reaching the school-house; and while in the ante-room removing their wraps, they could hear the sound of many voices in talk and laughter from the large room where the scholars were assembling for the morning exercises.

"Ida Howells is there, I know," said Mollie, "I can tell her by that silly laugh. I hope I never giggle as she does."

"Yes," replied Jennie, "and that loud voice belongs to Maggie Smith. It is too bad she so loud; she is a nice girl, but people think her rude and course because she will speak in such high tones."

As they joined the group, a quick thought flashed into Jennie's mind; "that is what mamma meant. It is better to be known by a plaid dress than by these things." Soon the bell rang, and in the hours that followed only once was there a reminder of the plaid dress. When the writing exercises were returned to the girls, she heard the teacher say in a low tone to the pupil whose seat was directly behind her own: "I am sorry to see that you are still so careless with your penmanship. It is not necessary for you to affix your name to your exercise. I always know it from the others by its untidy appearance."

"Well," thought Jennie, "there it is again. I wonder if I am known by any disagreeable traits. I don't believe I am." But now that her eyes were open to observe herself, it was not many days before she discovered that there was one glaring fault which distinguished her from the other girls. It was commonly understood that anything described by Jennie Hunt was a little more highly colored than it would be by any one else. "Did Jennie Hunt tell you that? Well, you know she is apt to get things a little twisted," she heard one say; and again, "I don't believe it was quite so bad, Jennie exaggerates so, you know."

This was a serious revelation to our light-hearted, easy-going Jennie, and resulted in more than one thoughtful mood in which she meditated upon the failing. She found that it was her eagerness to create excitement and surprise among her companions that had led her into the habit, and she was shocked to recall how inaccurate she had sometimes been, with no thought of being so, for Jennie loved the truth, and would never have willingly departed from it in the least.

"If I have to be marked by that plaid dress when out with the girls," she said to herself, "I will not be known by this ridiculous fault," and

she set to work with a will to overcome it. It was then that she realized what a strength the habit had gained, and was often discouraged to find herself tempted and overcome. But she found, too, that school-girls are just as quick to discern noble and pleasing characteristics.

"This is Mary Foote's desk; no other ever looks so nice," was the comment one day to a visitor. Then, when the lonely French teacher was so pleased and touched by an act of kind attention from one of her class, the general verdict was rendered, "it must have been Ada; no other girl would have thought of it."

It was strange that while studying character in this way, and finding herself so weak to overcome what had seemed a foolish, trafficking habit, Jennie should be led to study more closely than ever before the character of Jesus Christ, the perfect one, and to seek his help to make her own more true and lovable? Thus it was, and before a pretty new dress was ready to be worn, her mother's prayers were answered, and Jennie was seeking to be known in the daily living, first of all, as a loving and faithful follower of her Lord and Saviour.

SELECTED.

Man's Weakness and Man's Progress.

BY ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

"The Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."—GEN. viii. 21.

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth."—GEN. vi. 5, 6.

Introduction.—These are two strange, deep passages, telling us wonderful things of the thoughts of God about us; but the strange thing that I ask you to notice first is this—that it is the very same thing that moves God's anger and His pity. God is angry with man because the imagination of his heart is so constantly evil. God pities man because the imaginations of his heart is so constantly evil. But there is a great difference in the circumstances. God pities man because his imaginations are so evil when he is trying to do well. God is angry with man for those imaginations when man only wants to go from bad to worse, and to find out some new evil that he may do it. When we read of God's pitying man so, because of the evil character of the imaginations of his heart, there was man standing in a lonely land. The smoke of sacrifice was going up, and they who had evil hearts, but desired that God should make them holy hearts, were standing with heads bowed round the altar, and trusting that the smoke of their sacrifice might be the image of the thoughts of their hearts, passing upward into the clear air, and being dissipated there, and freed from all that was earthly. And so God pities us—with a wonderful love. "God commendeth His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; much more then, being justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." There is the answer to our misgivings. We shall be saved from wrath. God, when He sees the imaginations of our hearts at the very weakest and worst, will look upon us with pity and not with wrath. So then, in this early story, we see both man's weakness and man's progress, turning from the downward to the upward, although He is the self-same man. And St. Paul tells us what a wonderful effort God has made for man—an effort past thought, that His Son, the Perfect, the Eternal, the all-Holy, should die for us—not as one man will sometimes die for others because they are good, and he would have their cause to triumph—but die for us because we are ungodly.

This leads us to the very simple yet very great question—

1. *What is man for?* Apparently everything else upon earth is for man. Science is telling us that for all ages past there have been made and stored up those things which are for daily use in the house of every one of us today. Think of the kinds of food that grow in all the ends of the earth for our use; of the wonders buried in the mine; of electricity, etc.

There is nothing in the earth but has its use and fulfills it. And is it to be imagined that so noble a being as man is the only one without some great

end to answer. Every thing is made for an upward use, for that which is higher than itself. If man is not the sole exception to this rule; if he also is not made for what is lower, we do not know anything higher that he can be made for, except his God. It must be to serve God. It must be to please God. And now I will just divide what I mean by God's service into simple heads.

1. There is the keeping of God's commandments.
2. The performance of the obligations of our position, which are not written down in the commandments.

3. The choice of our position.

4. The managing of our own thoughts. These are four comprehensive heads of the service of God, and it must be for these things that man was made.

II *What has God done to help man towards this end?* We have endless reason to believe that God yearns to help man. Can you imagine that what God yearns for is not being fulfilled every moment? Does He desire that we should serve Him? In answer, we have the witness of our own hearts; the revelation of His will from the very beginning of the world; the life of His Son. If we listen to the testimony of these, we shall find that there is no limit to the intensity of God's desire for our salvation (Parable of Good Shepherd). The desire of God cannot help but be realized. Think in how many instances it is taught that the faith that fixes itself upon God is answered (Good Centurion, etc.). And if man's desire toward God is fulfilled, shall not God's desire for man be also fulfilled?

III. *What shall we do to second God's desire?* If I see that my object in life must be something above me, and can be only God, and if I see that God has done in the past, and is now doing, what God's desire and yearning love must be doing, then I am bound to ask, "What can I do myself that I may second God's desire, that it may not beat on me like a wave upon an adamant rock?"

Well, the answers to that are simple:—

1. *Believe.* Believe that God's desire for you cannot remain inactive; that the life and work of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit are the expression of that desire.

2. If you believe, or if you feel that a little more thinking will enable you to lay faster hold upon it, then just accept the thought with the desire to follow where it leads. God's desire is not inactive. Do not let your realization of it be inactive. Make up your mind that you will follow where He leads.

3. Having come to that determination, seal it by definite acts.

The Right Kind Of A Boy.

If a boy is always ready for little deeds of kindness; if he is willing to give up his own plans to help along the plans of others; if he tells the truth, though it may be against himself; if he obeys his parents cheerfully and promptly, even when the task is hard and disagreeable, it is easy for any one to see what that boy desires most. His wish is to do right: and such a wish is always granted, because the Holy Spirit is ever ready to lead the willing feet into the path of righteousness.

An unstudied Bible means a grieved, silenced Holy Spirit, my fellow Christian; for the Holy Spirit unites and influences your spirit in the written word, just as in conversation your spirit and mine meet and influence each other through the words which we may use. It is as we look into the mirror of the written word that the Holy Spirit reveals to us and glorifies Jesus.—Rev. John Riddell.

If you desire to spend a happy year, observe the following rules: 1. Accept the peace already made with God. 2. Make peace with any with whom you may have been at enmity. 3. Live peaceably with all men. The man who is at peace with God, and living at peace with his fellow-men, must needs be happy.

A David buried quick in a cave, a Daniel in the lion's den find that prayer can win its way up to God and find audience. For the high and lofty One, who hath the heaven for his throne and the earth for his footstool, hath an eye to them also who are of a poor and contrite spirit, and therefore, no desperate case of the people of God renders prayers useless.—Geo. Hutcheson.